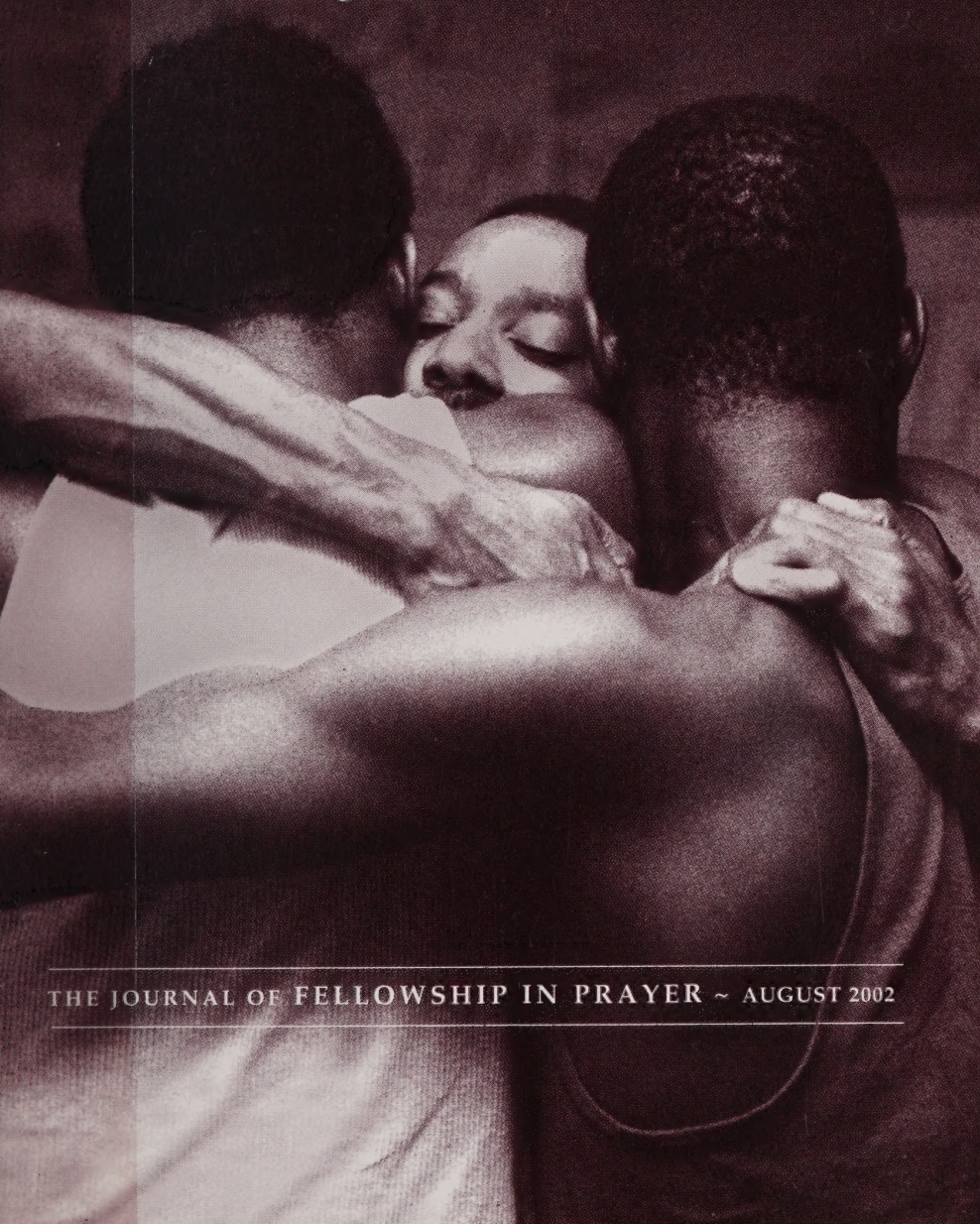


v.53, no. 4 (Aug 2002)

SACRED JOURNEY



THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER ~ AUGUST 2002

SACRED JOURNEY[®]

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

The mission of Fellowship in Prayer is

to encourage and support

a spiritual orientation to life,

to promote the practice of

prayer,

meditation,

and service to others,

and to help bring about

a deeper spirit of unity

among humankind.

C O N T E N T S

Vol. 53, No. 4, August 2002

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Cover photo by Abraham Menashe.

GRATITUDE



Fellowship in Prayer's second "Companions on the Sacred Journey" conference this past June 14-16 was a wonderful and inspiring success. Over 500 women and men from all over the country traveled to Princeton to see and listen to Joan Borysenko, Jerry May, and fifteen other spiritual leaders, musicians and dancers from a variety of the world's faith traditions.

In the pages that follow, Rebecca Laird, our editor, has recreated for you in words and photos some of the highlights of those memorable three days.

For my part, I want to express my deep and heartfelt thanks to some of the people, behind the scenes as it were, who helped immeasurably to make the conference such a heart-warming and valuable experience.

First and foremost, I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my wife, Anne, whose enthusiasm, support, and expert counsel about so many aspects of the conference were invaluable.

A huge vote of thanks to Laurel Cantor, the greatly gifted designer who created the layout and design of this journal. Laurel also created all the stunning art work for the conference, from the beautiful brochure, to the art work for the ads, registration packet, tote bag and all the printed material that followed.

The conference would have been, literally, impossible without Tara Zarillo of the University Events Office and her hard work, cheerful willingness, and detailed knowledge of the University and its facilities. Thank you, Tara!

In Fellowship in Prayer's office, Rebecca Laird, the editor of *SACRED JOURNEY* not only produced and directed the

beautiful Closing Ceremony on Sunday, but also, with the help of her assistant, Cecilia Rousseau, worked skillfully to keep the conference and its presenters and workshop leaders constantly in front of our readers in the months and weeks leading up to the event.

Linda Baumann, our office and production manager, together with my assistant, Barbara Heck, put together and managed the thousand-and-one details that made it possible for the 500 registrants to come together in the right places at the right times for the presentations, workshops, meals, gatherings, and—very importantly—schmoozing opportunities offered by the conference. A thousand thanks to both of you.

It is my deep hope that many of you who were at the conference—or who are reading these words—will make it a commitment to compile a list of Companions on the Sacred Journey (those you met at the conference or who you may meet in your daily rounds) with whom you can keep in touch via phone, fax, email or snail mail, or—better yet—in person in the weeks and months ahead. As those of us know who experienced the warmth, the insights, and the support of people we met at the conference, spiritual friendship with a like-minded friend can make your sacred journey a truly joyous one.

Thank you, All!



Paul Walsh and Marcia Prager at the conference. Photo by Karen McLean.

WHAT A WEEKEND IT WAS!



When five hundred spirited people gather in one place, vital things happen. Many who attended the "Companions on the Sacred Journey" conference on the Princeton University campus in June wrote to us after heading home footsore, weary, but inspired. One wrote: "It is so hard to put into words just what the weekend conference did for and meant to me...so many things just fell into place.... The inadequacy of words is maddening sometimes."

How do you describe trying to get to Princeton in a drenching rain for Friday night's Kabbalat Shabbat service? Rabbi Marcia Prager invited us to "step aside from the physical world of doing and making, of controlling and manipulating, into the world of the soul." Afterwards many gathered to share refreshments and build relationships both of which are essential to becoming true companions, a word that literally means "friends-with-bread."

On Saturday the intrepid gathered for early morning yoga. When morning keynote speaker, psychiatrist and spiritual director, Gerald May took to the lectern in a packed lecture hall, we heard these deep and reassuring words: "In worldly matters, it's good to have light so we can know what is happening and where to go. But in deep matters of the soul, it is when we do think we know what we are doing that we are likely to stumble and fall. So God darkens things in order to keep us safe—so we know we don't know, and are more likely to leave things in God's hands."

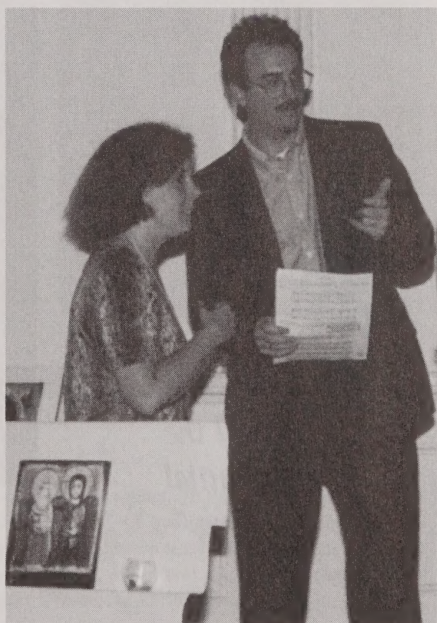
A variety of workshops followed. People spread out across the leafy campus to learn new ways of prayer, meditation, thinking, and moving. One conferee summarized what we heard from others, "The spiritual essence and quality of all those who spoke and led workshops was very evident." Yes, the

content was great but those that embodied the truths they sought to teach, left the most lasting impressions.

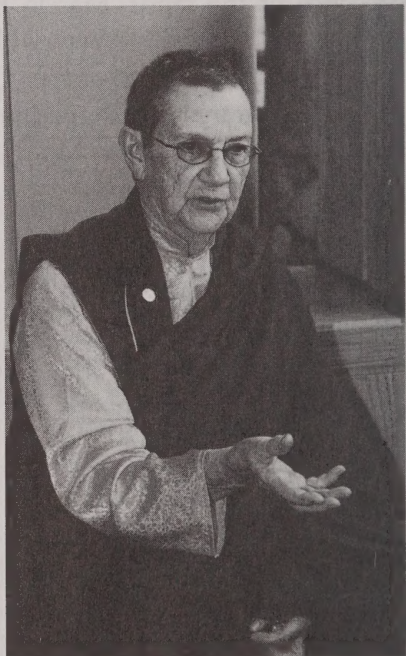
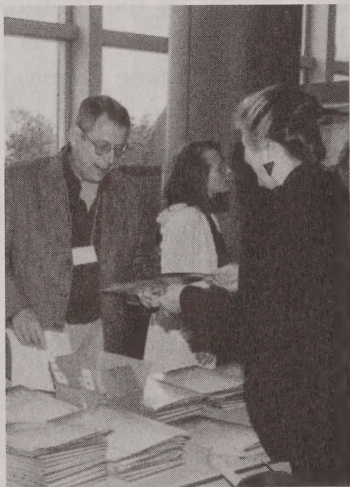
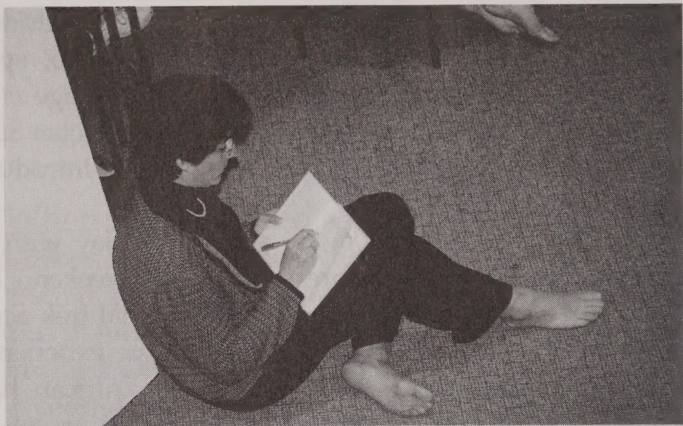
Saturday night, in the beauty of Richardson Auditorium, proponent of mind-body wholeness, Joan Borysenko, spoke eloquently and with humor about how we can manage crisis, change, and challenges with spiritual optimism. Musician Suzin Green capped off the night with a kirtan concert that introduced the sacred music of India.

Sunday dawned clear and many started the day with the community breakfast where impressions of the weekend and addresses were exchanged. Then we made the final trek across the campus to Richardson Auditorium where we experienced one perfect hour celebrating the breath of life. African hand drums and processional kites tangibly reminded us of the presence of the spirit. Marcia Prager taught us the rapturous truth that “YyyHhhhWwwwHhhh—the breath of life—is the very name and essence of the One we seek.” Trime Lhamo led us in a communal breath meditation that stilled us all and set us firmly on the earth. Then Martha Dudich filled the hall with her voice and led us in chanting, “The peace of the earth be with you, the peace of the heavens, too.” When we all left the building to the thrum and beat of the drums, we were aware that the spirit of life, the breath of life, the beauty that makes life worthwhile was traveling with us wherever we might go. What a weekend it was!

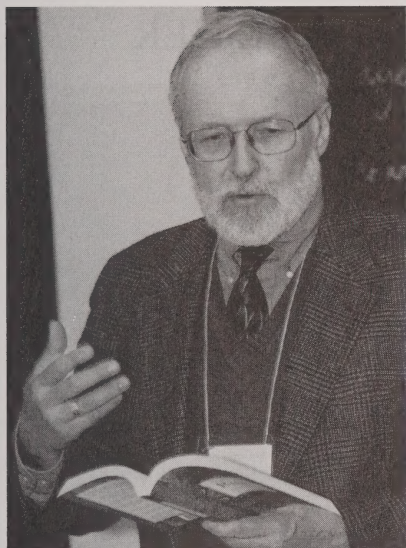
Rebecca Laird and Jeff Markay prepare for the Taizé service.



THE WORKSHOPS

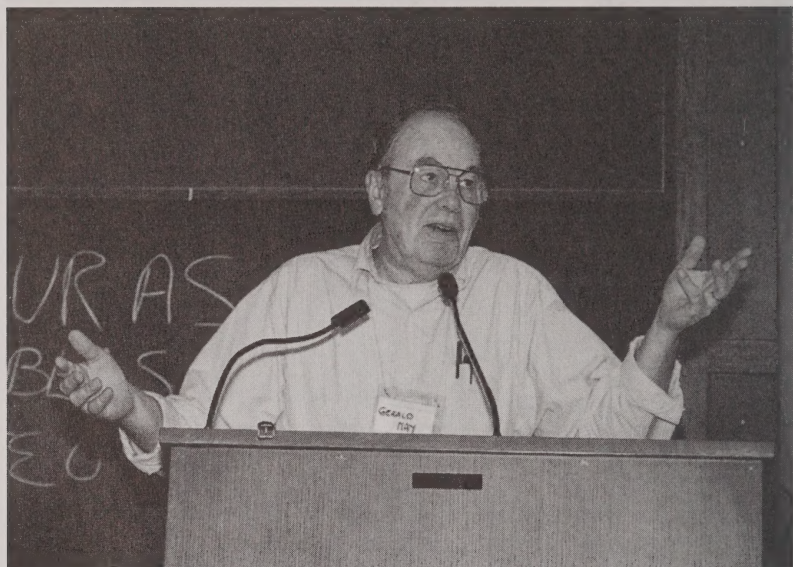


*"I loved the
experiential
learning."*



Clockwise from left top: A participant takes time to reflect. A thoughtful Robert Corin Morris teaches on "The Art of Unceasing Prayer." A group walks the labyrinth. A solitary woman prays in the labyrinth's center. Trime Lhamo leads a workshop on "Turning the Poisons in Your Mind into Good Medicine." Volunteer Garnette Arledge helps participants register in Frist Campus Center. Photos by Karen McLean.

GATHERING TOGETHER



“God is closer to us, the mystics say, than our breath. Closer than we are to ourselves. St. John of the Cross says, ‘We are in God like a stone is in the earth. . . . already in the Center.’ There is no way to get any closer to God than we already are. The spiritual life, then, is not about actually coming closer to God but rather the realization of the communion and union that already exists, and always has, and always will, forever.”

~Gerald May, *The Dark Night of the Soul*

Top left: Gerald May during his keynote address. Opposite page: Top, Joan Borysenko speaks in Richardson Auditorium. Bottom, Carol Burns and early morning yoga participants stretch and ready for a long, enriching day.



"During the time between crisis and incorporation—those moments when the ground drops out from under us— we die to who we are and are not yet reborn to who we might be. You enter a place between the no longer and the not yet. This is sacred space, the place of possibility and the place of transformation. It can be also be a place of despair. It depends on the meaning you give it. Can you see this moment as a place of soul-making rather than soul-breaking?"

~Joan Borysenko,
Spiritual Optimism



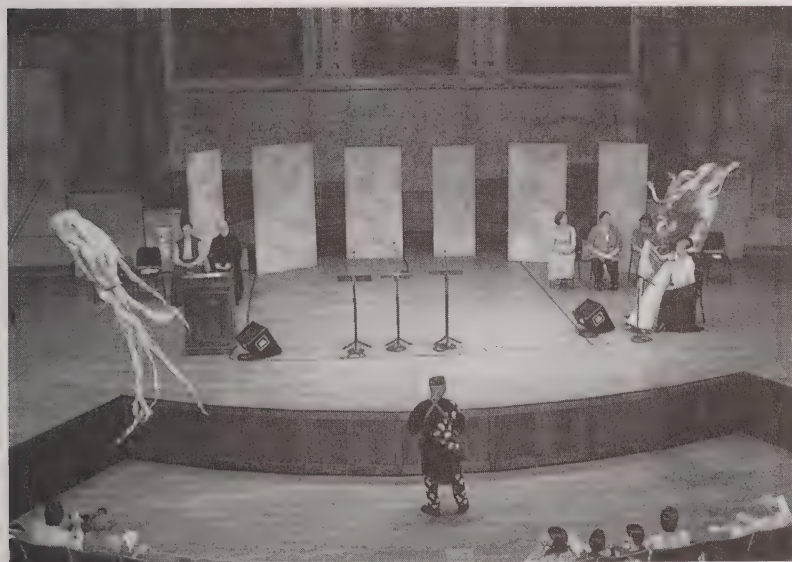
*"The conference was like
spiritual dim sum.
I loved it!"*

THE CELEBRATIONS



"From the beginning Shabbat service to the Closing Ceremony, I felt spiritually uplifted."





Clockwise, from left page, top: The Taizé service held in the Nassau Presbyterian Church was, for one participant, "the most prayerful time I can remember having in years." Martha Dudich leads the chant, "Come all you people. Come and praise your Maker," during the Closing Ceremony. Marcia Prager leads us in reciting, "As we breathe out what the trees breathe in, And the trees breathe out what we breathe in, So we breathe each other into life, We and You," in the conference's final event. John Arrucci drums in the center of Richardson Auditorium as the processional kites fly at the beginning of the Closing Ceremony. Jeff Markay explains the beauty of the icons adorning the sanctuary during the Taizé service.

SPIRITUALITY & THE FAMILY



What Religion Should I Be?

A Letter from a Loving Aunt

Ann Quinn

Dear Victoria: Your recent email asked: "How does one know what religion to be?" Here are some ruminations. Like many, I've wrestled often with this important and deep question. Please, take what you like from this letter and work with it. Simply leave the rest alone for now.

It is true that you grew up with little religious training. Your Jewish father and Christian mother, who love you very much, aren't particularly involved in religion themselves (although your father says the best prayers at your dining room table before our holiday feasts!).

Now in college, you are apparently very interested in religion, which is quite wonderful and very natural. You have both the freedom and responsibility to do this work of exploring what religion means to you. You must live

Ann Quinn is a trustee of Fellowship in Prayer, a spiritual director who recently completed the Shalem Institute's Program for Spiritual Guidance, an Associate of Holy Cross Monastery, a retired corporate executive, and a widow actively involved with family, friends, and three grandchildren. Victoria, her niece, was very recently baptized a Presbyterian.

into the question you raise: “How do I know what religion to be?” There is no easy answer. Instead, there is freedom since there is nothing preventing you from this exploration. There is also a responsibility to yourself to explore this question by learning more about religion and also more about your inner self, your preferences, and your motivations.

This is work! It may be a challenge to find a religious “home.” I hope it will help you to remember that some people grow up in a restrictive environment and feel compelled to live in a certain way. I am grateful for your opportunity to use your freedom and responsibility rather than have someone else’s answers forced on you.

Our human need for religion stems from trying to come to terms with the mysterious world in which we live. We sense that there is something beneath the physical world, beyond our feelings and senses. But what is it and what does it mean to me and to those close to me? What does it mean to the world?

The major wisdom traditions address this invisible Spirit—this creative, mysterious, guiding power—by creating principles and practices that:

- Cultivate love of ourselves, our neighbors, of God, and of nature.
- Cultivate wisdom that helps us find meaning in life, be in relationship with others, be true to ourselves, live in uncertainty and mystery, deal with suffering, sickness, and death, honor life’s transitions, like birth, marriage, and death.
- Cultivate awareness of the sacred dimension of life through practices like worship, prayer, meditation, and singing.

- Respect our connectedness as fellow human beings while acknowledging our differences.
- Help us be generous in service to others.

Religions or wisdom traditions hold a set of beliefs about these topics and about God and tend to be organized around holy scriptures, leaders, and places of worship. The major traditions include Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim. There are many more with fewer living adherents, such as the Native Americans. Within each tradition, different groups will have quite different perspectives on important issues. For example, Christians could be Presbyterians, Baptists, Catholics, Methodists, Episcopalians, or from many other Christian denominations. Within Judaism there are Orthodox, conservative, and reformed groups. Added to these differences, each local place of worship may also have its own version of rituals or prayers. All of this creates the possibility of having a wide range of experiences even within the same religious tradition. Some people change their religion during the course of their lives, as well.

Some people focus primarily on religion, which is usually understood as a specific system of faith and worship, others emphasize spirituality, and some live both fully. Spirituality is a living experience of connection with the invisible Sacred, discovering the creative power, love, kindness, generosity, and infinite compassion, which is everywhere and present in each moment. For some people, walking on a trail in the woods or watching a sunset may be filled with the experience of the divine. For others, knitting becomes a meditative connection to an ultimate, loving truth.



Ann Quinn and her niece, Victoria.

There are so many paths to God because there are so many different people in the world with differing histories and inner needs. Here is a simple image that helps me to understand how the different traditions are related: Picture the sun and the earth. Now put a huge piece of black cloth between the sun and the earth so that the sun does not shine on us. The Christians cut a cross into the blackness, and the light shines on them. The Jews cut out a menorah or a star of David, and the light shines on them. The Buddhists, the Hindus, the Native Americans, those living the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous all find ways to be in the light. Perhaps there are some sitting on a mountaintop watching the sunset who experience the light shining directly.

The light all points to God, who is seen from many perspectives and is known by many names. Each human being has a divine light deeply embedded inside. Our deepest desire is to realize our oneness with that divine light. It is calling us home. God isn't just "out there" like the sun, but is also present everywhere. We're all God's kids living this mystery we call life and are connected because of that.

Let me not overemphasize the similarity among religions. There are real differences about theology and practice. Some accept others' beliefs, others do not. Many struggle with how to understand or accept certain sexual orientations, or what leadership positions women may hold, or if the Divine Feminine is a part of God's nature.

And I must address a sensitive area, because most traditions suggest waiting for sexual experience until a serious, committed, long-term relationship (marriage) is established. Sexual experience is extraordinarily intense and intimate and can be stunningly pleasurable. It, therefore, leaves us very vulnerable. Further, sexual experience is sacred because our bodies are sacred. Our bodies are the temples in which our spirits, our souls, live while we are here on Earth. When we die, this temple dies, although our spirits and souls may live forever. So things like drugs, alcohol, or violence that harm our bodies or our spirits are to be avoided.

Where does this leave you? Here are (at least, for this letter) my last suggestions:

First, keep seeking your path to God. You may find one that is right for you quickly or it may take a long time. You won't make a mistake! You will learn and grow. Listen to your heart. God is calling you even as you are seeking Him (or Her!), and is helping you in this process.

Second, any group to which you are attracted should welcome you warmly. It should never coerce you to stay or do anything that would harm you. When you want to leave, the group must accept that with no restraints whatsoever. Sadly, there are people looking for the Holy One in dangerous ways that include forcing people onto their path.

Third, your email said that you enjoy going to church with Grandma, who loves you very much. There may be clues here about your path. Consider what it is that you enjoy. Do you like being with Grandma or with the other people or young people? Is it the church setting itself that you enjoy? Is it the teachings from the minister? Is there a sense of belonging in your heart? It is possible that a church like Grandma's Presbyterian church is your home.

Last, know that I love you. I would be very honored to continue to share with you about your journey.

I love you.

Ann

SPIRITUALITY & EVERYDAY LIFE



The Secret of Plowing

Robert Wuthnow



I've probably spent no more than four months of my entire life plowing. I've spent far more time than that eating and sleeping, going to school, writing and teaching. I suspect I've even spent more time at the movies. But plowing was one of those formative experiences that I will never forget. I spent about two weeks plowing every summer from the time I was twelve until I was twenty.

How it was done is now so unfamiliar that I need to begin by describing it. I've heard city people refer to hay rakes and even tractors as plows. Plows can also refer to blades on the front of snow trucks. But I'm referring to the kind farmers pull behind a tractor.

*Robert Wuthnow is Gerhard R. Andlinger Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for the Study of American Religion at Princeton University. A highly prolific and award-winning author, his most recent books are *Creative Spirituality: The Way of the Artist* and *Growing Up Religious: Christians and Jews and Their Journeys of Faith*.*

Plowing this way had started around the beginning of the twentieth century when tractors came into popular use. The earliest plows, however, go back many centuries. They were little more than a sharp wooden spike about six or eight inches long and a few inches wide with a handle attached. A man guided the plow from behind while an ox pulled it through the field. Those plows loosened the soil and made a crude furrow in which seeds were planted.

What we used in the 1950s was a marked improvement called the moldboard plow, which Mr. John Deere of Moline, Illinois, had patented in 1865. The moldboard plow was made of steel and was shaped in a way that caused the earth cut by the point of the plow to roll over, bottom side up. A moldboard plow effectively turned under the stubble and weeds, leaving a cloddy field of top soil. Unless there were rocks or stumps in the field, a farmer could plow about two acres a day this way, which meant walking about sixteen miles. At that rate, it took most of the summer to plow an eighty acre farm.

In 1958 our plow was a three-bottom moldboard plow. Our plow was on the small side compared to most of the other plows in the neighborhood. People said you could pretty well judge how successful a farmer was by how many bottoms—or moldboards—his plow had.

Plowing took place every summer just after wheat harvest, which usually ended around the Fourth of July. Plowing rid the fields of wheat stubble and weeds. If plowing was not done soon after harvest, the weeds grew, depleting the soil of nutrients and making it more difficult to plow. Plowing was the first step of readying the soil for planting in the fall. After being plowed, a field lay barren for several weeks. Rain mellowed the clods but caused weeds to sprout. To control the weeds, the plowed field

would be cultivated with a harrow that tilled the soil.

A typical plowing day began at 6 A.M. I usually flopped drowsily out of bed, pulled on a pair of jeans and a long-sleeved blue work shirt, quickly ate a bowl of cereal, and joined my father at the gasoline barrel. This was a 300 gallon barrel from which we filled as many as a dozen five gallon cans to last the day. We loaded these, along with grease guns and tools, a chain, water jug, and lunch boxes, in the pick-up truck. Usually the tractor and plow were already in the field from the day before. If not, one of us would remove the tin can that kept rain out of the upright exhaust pipe, fill the tractor with gas, hitch up the plow, and drive out to the field.



Robert Wuthnow

We owned several fields and rented several others, so going to the field usually involved a drive of somewhere between three and eight miles. Some of the fields were as small as ten to twenty acres; the largest were eighty to a hundred. An acre is defined as one rod (about 16 feet wide by half a mile long). I used to wile away the time plowing by trying to do the math in my head: 3.75 miles per hour times three and a half feet on each pass. How long would it take to finish? Sometimes I could figure it out if the field was the right shape, but mostly I'd give up and just count on being in the field for a long time. On average, though, we could plow about twenty acres a day.

I guess plowing seems like a pretty simple task, at least when you whiz by on the highway and see someone sitting on a tractor. But it does require some skill—in fact, quite a bit of skill, when I look back on it. One of the big decisions is whether to plow the field from the outside in, finishing in the middle, or from the inside out, finishing on the outside.

The first “round” around the edge of the field is the hardest. Until I got older, my father always did the first round. I rode along on the tractor to see how it was done. The trick on the first round was to plow as close to the fence posts as possible without actually hitting them, or to the hedge without the branches knocking you off the tractor. The farmer steers the tractor with one hand and uses the other to pull the trip rope which engages the plow. A mark of skill (and confidence) is engaging the plow on the go (without stopping the tractor). When you first start, you set the throttle to give the tractor enough gas, then push forward on the hand-operated clutch. The clutch was the deciding factor in when a boy could start

plowing. Your arms had to be long enough to reach it easily and you had to be strong enough to push it in. I could steer a tractor well enough by the time I was eight or nine, but wasn't a sure bet for getting it started or stopped for several years after that.

While the work is generally easy, plowing does include some challenges. On straight stretches the plow can become "balled up" by large weeds or a collection of straw. Watching for a ball-up requires looking back at the plow every thirty seconds or so. When one occurs, the first resort is to stop, put the tractor in reverse, and back up no more than a couple of feet, hoping the ball-up dislodges. Usually this doesn't work. The second option is to repeat the backing-up process, but then get off the tractor, making sure the clutch is disengaged, lock the brakes, and manually dislodge the ball-up by crawling under the plow and digging out weeds, straw, and mud with one's hands. One of our neighbors who had flown combat missions in Korea said the only time he missed the Air Force was one hot July afternoon digging a ball-up out of his plow.

For all of its problems, plowing was a deeply satisfying experience. It left a fresh field of new soil in place of a weedy one. The rhythm of the stubble turning over and under was pleasant to watch. If any of the weeds were in bloom, the air was filled with a distinct fragrance. Gulls often followed the tractor to see what might be turned up. Scouring through the soil polished the rolling cutters, shears, and moldboards to a mirror sheen. Even the furrows were smooth and soft to the touch.

Plowing gradually fell out of practice as scientific studies showed it unnecessarily depleted the soil of moisture and as new discs, undercutters, and weed sprays replaced it. But farmers continued to plow, and I

suspect part of the reason was the simple aesthetic pleasure it provided.

For me, plowing was also a state of mind, a discipline, a practice. A friend once commented that plowing was surely the most boring job in the world. To be sure, twelve hours a day in a hot sun and wind was not the life to which most teenagers aspired. Yet I have come to realize that it provided a rare opportunity to think, to reflect, and just to be.

I have never been one to engage in the kind of ritual chanting practiced in some religions, but I think plowing had the same effect for me. Its rhythms and the need for nearly constant attention to the moment blocks out the restless rational thinking that dominates so much of our lives. Certainly the routine of making ever smaller rounds, moving slowly along each side of the field

Little by little.

Keep at it.

Be patient.

again and again, resembles the discipline of walking a labyrinth. I used to pass the time thinking about what I would be when I grew up or trying to remember and sing the lyrics of popular songs. But after a while, I just was. Aware of myself, in the moment, the billowing clouds, the hot Kansas wind, the roar of the tractor, its loudly purring four-cylinder engine magnificently blocking out all other sounds, nobody else in sight—all of these came together in one defining experience.

I sometimes think of this time of plowing as what life was meant to be, for sitting on a tractor all day is a kind of discipline that requires little else than being present. The goal is well-defined and so is the path to that goal. In comparison, real life is much messier. While I sat plowing, my father was off for hours settling accounts at the grain

elevator, driving to another town to get a broken machine fixed, making arrangements elsewhere for the plow shears to be hard-surfaced for another season, stopping at the pharmacy for medicine, deciding whether to see the doctor, making a trip home for supplies, and on and on it went. Real life took planning and ran off in all directions, unlike the plow that simply moved forward, spoke upon spoke, wheel upon wheel.

Still, the rhythm of plowing has been a model for living other parts of my life. Compared with harvest, plowing was anticlimactic, secondary, slower paced. Tensions ran highest during harvest, for it was the time when every moment mattered: a miscalculation, a broken gear shaft, a dull sickle could mean the difference between wheat crop safely harvested and one still vulnerable to hail and rain. Plowing was less urgent and could therefore unfold at its own pace. No amount of wishful thinking could widen the plow or speed up the tractor. The secret of plowing was knowing simply that little by little the job would get done. Little by little. Keep at it. Be patient.

I think this must be the same insight that comes to those who do needlepoint, knitting, or quilting. Especially at first, the progress is almost so slow as to be imperceptible. Yet little by little a task gets done.

The cycle of plowing is not complete without taking full consideration of when the plow is simply at rest. This is how most of its time is spent. When plowing is finished, the farmer breaks open a can of thick axle grease and smears it on the moldboards, the shears, and rolling cutters to prevent them from rusting during the long fall and winter of snow and rain. Then the plow is positioned out of the way, silently awaiting another season.

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A TRANSFORMING EXPERIENCE



Love from Every Direction

Karen Holmgren

If we have our eyes open, we can see the face of Christ in many people. It's easy to see Christ in the ones we regard as holy, as I did in the face of my pastor as he comforted a dying AIDS patient, or in the eyes of the abbot when I explained my desire to join the Order of St. Benedict. But when we behold Christ in one of the *anawim*, the marginalized, it can be quite startling.



There was a reggae festival at the beach last summer. After I purchased a plate of Caribbean-style food, I walked around trying to find my friend. We were supposed to meet at the band shell where the dancing was under way. Before buying a ticket I wanted to be sure she was there, so I stood on the curb and craned to see if I could see her among the people beyond the fence, but she wasn't there. As I turned away, a man seated on the curb spoke to me.

Karen Holmgren is a graphic designer and artist living in Oceanside, California, where she is leader of a local women's spirituality group, Shekinah Circle. Her passion is learning and telling the Story of the Universe.

"Miss, will you take this? I have too much and I can't eat it."

He was worn and tired, and as weather-beaten as an old shoe. His skin was turned to leather by exposure to the sun. Even the whites of his eyes were brown. He held up a skewer of Thai chicken.

"But I have my own dinner!" I exclaimed. "It's enough for me."

"Please. I really can't eat it. I assure you I haven't touched it," he insisted.

As I looked into his eyes, I saw something deep, something ancient. "You really want me to have this,

*Love comes
to us from
every
direction.*

don't you? Okay. Thank you. And God bless you!" He returned the blessing, and I turned and walked away with the skewer of chicken.

I could hear a negative voice in my mind saying, "You're not really going to eat that, are you? It can't be safe."

Defiantly, joyfully, I answered that voice. "Yes, I am going to eat it."

I found a place on the beach, sat down, and began to munch on the chicken. It was delicious. And as I ate, I thought about the man and his gift. If he had asked me for money to buy food, I gladly would have given him a few dollars or gone and purchased a meal for him. But here he was, giving me his food. It's meaning was puzzling. This generous gift from one who might have been an object of pity or scorn took me by surprise. The tables were turned. He was the one with nothing, I was the one with plenty. Yet he was offering to share his meal with me. Perhaps he was really richer than I.

Suddenly, it occurred to me that this was another encounter with Christ, and the joy of revelation filled me. Christ encourages us to serve God by serving the needy. Through this service we ourselves are graced in extraordinary ways. By accepting the gift, I connected with this man and acknowledged his humanity.

Christ's love comes to us from every direction—sometimes when we least expect it.



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P R A Y E R S



A Traditional Jewish Prayer for Mourning

We pray that we might encounter
The creator, whose gift is life, even after death.

Who sustains the living and provides for the dead;
Who supports the fallen, heals the dispirited,
Releases the burdened and maintains the trust of
Those who sleep in the dust.

Oh, incomparable God of death and life,
We trust you will guarantee their labors of goodness.
Praised be God, whose gift is life, even after death.

Translated by Rabbi Allen S. Maller

Allen S. Maller is Rabbi of Temple Akiba in Culver City, CA.

Rabindranath Tagore was a Bengali poet, novelist, and educator who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. His prayer was sent to SACRED JOURNEY by Kaushal Nanavati, M.D.

Prayer of Rabindranath Tagore

Give me the strength to bear my joys and sorrows.

Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.

Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might.

Give me the strength to raise my mind high above earthly trifles. And give me the strength to surrender my strength to your will with love.

A Prayer for Encounter

May you encounter today someone who inspires you to see yourself as I see you; someone who supports you in the way you have strongly supported me; someone who speaks kind words to you as you have so often spoken to me; and may the light of hope and joy that you ignite in me be rekindled in you by all you encounter today.

Author unknown

SPIRITUALITY & HEALING



What is Healing?

Joy Carol



Seven years ago, I was faced with three life-threatening events in a period of three years. Just prior to leaving my work in Asia, I contracted a lethal streptococcus infection. Within hours after landing in New York, my knee had swollen to the size of a football. My doctor immediately admitted me to the hospital and began intravenous antibiotics, afraid the infection might reach my heart. With my temperature at 105 degrees, I lay in icepacks for days. Eventually I recovered. However, I didn't pay much attention to that incident and soon was back at my hectic travel schedule as manager of international development programs.

A year later, as I stood on a sidewalk in a quiet town, a woman accidentally stomped on her car's accelerator instead of the brake. The car struck me and knocked down

Joy Carol is a spiritual director, retreat leader, counselor, and author. She has lived and worked in the developing world for organizations such as the Ford Foundation, Save the Children, and the Christian Children's Fund. This article has been adapted from Towers of Hope: Stories to Help Us Heal, by Joy Carol, recently published by Forest of Peace Publishing. Phone (800) 659-3227 or contact your local bookstore to order a copy.

a four-by-four pole, which hit my head and fractured my skull. Then I was thrown into the window of a store behind me, shattering the plate glass. I was knocked unconscious with serious lacerations and injuries to my head, neck, and back, and I suffered from post-traumatic stress. But I was lucky. X-rays showed extensive cerebral hemorrhaging that could have caused seizures or strokes. Over time, I totally recovered. Although this close encounter with death got my attention, I was soon back to my fast-paced, “normal routine.”

One year later I had a routine follow-up brain scan and was shocked when the doctor said, “You have a brain tumor.” My blood seemed to turn icy cold. It couldn’t be true; I was healthy and full of life. The doctor began talking about the risks of surgery: five to ten percent chance of death, of being in a coma, of partial paralysis, of loss of speech or use of arm and leg. . . . I frantically added up the risks—a sum over 100 percent. In a minute, my life had turned upside down. Panic choked me as I realized I might die.

I don’t remember driving to my church for the prayer service. I told one of the ministers about my tumor and admitted I was frightened. Taking my hands she prayed, “God, sometimes our burdens seem almost too much for us. This one feels very heavy for Joy.” Later we discussed having a special healing service.

Fortunately, I found a supportive neurosurgeon, Dr. Harold Young. After visiting together he asked, “Shall we look at the x-rays?” He didn’t say, “I’ll look at your x-rays.” He seemed to welcome my participation. When I asked about risks, he answered: “There are very few risks because you will be very involved with your own healing process.” Saying those words validated my role.

Leaving his office, I felt confident. I canceled stressful activities and tried healing processes that complemented medical procedures: massage therapy, good nutrition, herbal teas, exercise. I imaged positive outcomes. I read scriptures and inspirational books. I prayed for acceptance, peace of mind, and healing. I contacted family and friends telling them I loved them, forgiving and asking for forgiveness.

At the healing service, the minister began: "God knows our needs before we ask. Let us open our lives to God's gift of grace and healing." As Romans 8:38 was read, I felt a soothing peace flowing over me in contrast to uncontrollable fear. ". . . neither death nor life will be able to separate us from the love of God." As people laid their hands on me, I realized that I was connected to everyone there. I wasn't the only person who needed healing. We all needed it in some way: physically, mentally, spiritually, socially. By lifting our needs to God, we could share the power of healing love. When the service was finished, I knew the tumor was still inside my head but I felt "healed."

A few days later when I was taken into the operating room, I no longer experienced bone-chilling fear. I felt cherished and calm. Although aware I could die or be seriously disabled, I was prepared for that. I was already "healed." Just before I was put to sleep, I pledged to spend the rest of my life helping others with their spiritual journeys and healing processes.

It's been six years since the surgery. Although there's always the possibility the tumor could return, follow-up tests show no sign of it. During those traumatic times, I learned I needed a lot of "healing" beyond my obvious physical needs. I came to value how precious it is to be

alive, to have the opportunity to wake up to a new day. I also realized that we can celebrate life even though we may not have what we want, or be able to do what we want or “fix” what goes wrong.

Those life-threatening experiences taught me that it is possible to “heal” and to live life fully even when we are in the abyss of suffering. In discussions with others, I discovered that, although unable to change the terrible things that happen to us, we are able to change how we respond to difficult or painful events. We can choose to transform what seem like hopeless situations into personal triumphs. We can experience “healing” in the most challenging situations and find wholeness in our losses, traumas, and failures.

By “healing,” I do not mean “curing,” a narrow concept usually associated with the restoration of physical health. Curing is the main focus of the Western healthcare system involving the skilled use of diagnostic tools; technological, surgical, and chemical interventions; and the authority of experts to mount a concentrated assault on broken body parts. Curing often implies that the person receiving treatment is passive and the one offering it is active. Healing may involve curing, but it should not be limited to that outcome.

The concept of healing can be far-reaching. I believe everyone would benefit if we redefined “healing.” Here are elements I now include in my definition.

HEALING IS:

- ◆ Becoming whole, a life-long journey of becoming fully human, involving the totality of our being: body, mind, emotion, spirit, social, and political context, as well as our relationships with others and with the Divine.

Healing does not necessarily mean being happy or getting what we think we want out of life; it means growth, often with pain.

- ◆ Becoming our authentic self, releasing old unreal self-images, discovering who we really are, not what we think we should be, knowing why we are here and what we really value, restoring our ability to heed our aspirations.

- ◆ Reconnecting lost aspects of ourselves, paying attention to buried feelings and places inside us that are distressed or sick, enabling us to express our self in fullness, both the light and shadow sides.

- ◆ Being open to change and new possibilities; responding to problems by changing the picture; being willing to let in more life, to open up to what may have been previously closed or destroyed for us and that which holds promise of giving us new life and fulfillment.

- ◆ Facing our fears and refusing to be injured or wounded; changing our belief systems; breaking unnecessary taboos; letting go of what is familiar, and stepping into the unknown.

- ◆ Accepting that problems, pain, and suffering are part of life and inseparable from us—not a peripheral relationship, not something isolated or avoidable—enabling us to enter into problems and use suffering, pain, and life-threatening events to enrich our lives.

- ◆ Being empowered by the Divine; discovering meaning in our defects, disorders, problems, and diseases; experiencing new degrees of creativity and life forces that we might never have imagined before our difficulty; finding that our pains and fears are transformed into relief and confidence.

- ◆ Recognizing the value and preciousness of life, knowing that every moment is unique and significant,

which usually leads to a greater appreciation of the wonder of our minds, bodies, and spirits, and of the Divine.

- ♦ Having faith and hope—important preconditions for mental and physical health; having a belief in the Divine, the meaning of human life, and the universe; helping us to claim our capacity to create and make something new.

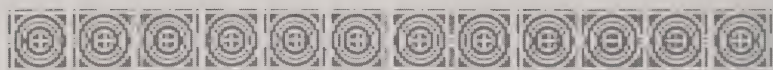
- ♦ Finding inner peace, contentment, and tranquility amid the realities of daily life, including its problems, changes, and chaos; experiencing a sense of fullness that makes the burdens of pain or illness lighter.

- ♦ Being forgiving of ourselves and others and being forgiven; giving ourselves and others the freedom to let go of rivalry, strife, anger, hatred, fear, and limitations.

- ♦ Feeling connected to one another, a sense of interdependence; knowing we are not isolated or autonomous, giving up the illusions of boundaries in life; taking responsibility, acting justly, and accepting that we share our humanity.

- ♦ Being loving and loved; loving one's self and wanting to love and serve others, as well as being capable of receiving love; having an ability to trust, a feeling of aliveness, and a sense of greater participation in life.

ILLUMINATIONS



Those who delight in benefitting others
Are supreme like a lamp made of a
 light-giving jewel—
It relies not on oil, nor vessel nor wick
and yet gives forth great light.



Intimacy in the society of the holy,
Conversation in the society of the learned,
And friendship with the unselfish—
These will cause no regrets.

~Nagarjuna and Sakya Pandit, *Elegant Sayings*

Give your sorrow all the space and shelter in yourself that
it is due, for if everyone bears his grief honestly and
courageously, the sorrow that now fills the world will
abate. And if you have given sorrow the space its gentle
origins demand, then you may truly say: life is beautiful
and so rich. So beautiful and rich that it makes you want
to believe in God.

~Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*

Selections on this page were submitted by Trime Lhamo, Carolyn Humphreys, and Glenn C. Gibbs. Send us your favorite quotes along with the author's name and source. We will use what we can in future issues.

Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you will do with your evening, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love and it will decide everything.

~Pedro Arrupe, former Superior General of the Society of Jesus

All Truth passes through three stages.

First, it is ridiculed.

Second, it is violently opposed.

Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.

~Arthur Schopenhauer, 19th Century German philosopher

In the summer in July we were hastening to the monastery of Our Lady for the holy festival.... We spent the night in open country, and I waked up early in the morning, when all was still sleeping and the sun had not yet peeped out from behind the forest.... Everywhere beauty passing all utterance! All was still, the air was light; the grass grows—Grow, grass of God; the bird sings—Sing bird of God; the babe cries in the woman's arms—God be with you, little man; grow and be happy, little babe.... Life is sweet.

~Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Raw Youth

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE



On the Not Doing of Evil

Robert Reese

The not doing of evil is not only the well looking at the donkey; it is the well looking at the well; it is the donkey looking at the donkey; it is the person looking at the person; it is the Mountain looking at the mountain...."

~Dogen Kigen, Zenji.

Do Not Do Anything Evil

Above the former Fort Ord, a compound of deserted Army barracks in the sandy hills near Monterey, sea gulls turn lazy circular patterns in the thin sunshine. Several years ago, Christina Williams, a thirteen-year-old Monterey County girl, was walking her dog on a quiet street in a safe neighborhood of the former military base. The next moment something happened that was wrong and unimaginable.

The girl was taken by a stranger, her dog left to wander home alone. Seven months later, her remains were found less than three miles from her home.

Robert Reese is lay ordained in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi and has been practicing for ten years with Rev. Katherine Thanas at the Monterey Bay Zen Center. He is the director of the Carl Cherry Center for the Arts and lives with his wife and daughter in Carmel Valley, CA.

More often than we like to think, acts like these are reported as commonplace. It has become a contemporary assumption that these horrific acts, in one guise or another, will always be with us.

While still under the cloud of this kidnaping and its aftermath, I attended a day of studying a koan from 13th Century China at the Green Gulch Farm Zen Center near San Francisco. The study group focused on the famous thirteenth case from the *Mumonkon*:

Once the monks of the Eastern Hall and the Western Hall were disputing about a cat. Nachuan, holding up the cat said, "Monks, if you can say a word of Zen, I will spare the cat. If you cannot, I will kill it!" No monk could answer. Nachuan killed the cat. In the evening, when Chao-chou came back, Nachuan told him of the incident. Chao-chou took off his sandals, put them on his head, and walked off. Nachuan said, "If you had been there, I could have saved the cat!"

Depending on the commentary you read, there are a number of ways to view the koan and its images. It invites our contemplation as an ethical study, a commentary on birth and death, as a treatise of action in accord with the dharma, and as a discussion on the fundamental unity of being.

The koan, however, was not yielding to me in any of these ways as we sat along the platforms of Green Dragon Temple. My attention veered relentlessly back to the missing girl; back to a fierce sadness that seemed to reside in my shoulders. Instead of penetrating the koan, I felt a terrible void that lived between my heart and diaphragm.

By their very nature, koans are not comprehensible on a literal, narrative level. But on this day, Nachuan's demonstration seemed needlessly mean-spirited and inexplicable. I wanted to meet the case in a substantial way, to see clarity and redemption in Nachuan's actions. For the most part, though, I merely squirmed doltishly along the wall. As Tenshin Reb Anderson, the Senior Dharma Teacher and former abbot of the San Francisco Zen Center, talked, I made mental conjectures until my head throbbed, but the koan was not fruitful in any readily discernible way.

*Can you
look at
your own
heart?*

Then, all of a sudden, out of nowhere, Tenshin Roshi posed the question: "What is intimate? What is near?" I heard the words; then they were inside me, like small keys in a forgotten room. And in the confluence of that warm summer afternoon, in the fragrance of eucalyptus and sea air, I discovered that what was intimate for me was an apprehension of what it was like to know discord and rupture and unspeakable sorrow.

"What is intimate? What is near?" were turning-words that perfectly signaled the gap between myself and the Williams kidnaping case, between myself and a staggering evil. These words ignited some recognition of the fear and cruelty that can produce such acts. The koan demonstrated my own complicity as neighbor and as father and as human being. Nachuan and the cat made vivid my own capacity for coercion and selfishness.

My inability to find an appropriate response to Christina Williams' kidnaping became the central issue represented in the koan of Nachuan killing the cat. I could

not act, nor could I say a word to save the cat—or the child. However, from this limited perspective, the quandary of Nachuan's action was revealed as my very life—right then and there. Nachuan's cat became a startling bridge between the irrevocable loss of a young girl and my own complicity as a member of the community. Nachuan's public case had become my personal case.

In *Being Peace*, the Vietnamese Zen teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, describes the story of a twelve-year-old Southeast Asian girl who was raped by a Thai pirate. She then jumped from a high place into the ocean to drown herself. In the poem, "Call Me By My True Name," Thich Nhat Hanh recounts the events and asks: Can we recognize ourselves in the pirate? In the girl? He writes, "If you or I were born today in those fishing villages, we might become sea pirates in twenty-five years. If you take a gun and shoot the pirate, you shoot us, all of us."

I was reminded of this story during a conversation with Katherine Thanas, a Soto Zen priest and teacher of more than thirty years. She sat directly in front of me—eye to eye, toe to toe—and we discussed in specific terms the capacity for good and evil. I told her I was disturbed by this murder, that I seemed to be looking for some antithesis to these events, a talisman for the pain.

She lobbed the issue back at me, "Can you look at your own heart, at your own capacity for good and regretful behavior?"

I was not unfamiliar with this territory, but it felt new to me—as though I was hearing it for the first time. Katherine Thanas did not answer my questions, but raised new ones. She pointed to the erosion of ethics we all sometimes feel. The minor transgressions. The slippage of

conscience that feels as though you've missed a step. The personal betrayals. The broken credos. The knowledge that you've overstepped a line that could not be clearly defined.

The root of the word evil is from the ancient Teutonic word, *ubiloz*, which means "up" or "over" and contains the notion of "going beyond the due measure," or "overstepping proper limits." Evil is something excessive.

To look deeply is to discover not only the lit places within, but also the dark terrain of excess. We begin to see our own capacity to produce horror. Of course, this is not an attractive sight. However, as the contemporary Zen teacher Charlotte Joko Beck says, part of the activity of sitting meditation is the business of lying down in the uncomfortable beds we make for ourselves. The practice of Zen is not skittering from our own pain and moving from the icy couch we have created. Examined at close range, our venality can reveal a web of pain and fear. To notice and acknowledge our frailties and tendencies toward waywardness is perhaps the only talisman for evil.

"If you bring forth what is inside you, what you bring forth will save you," says the *Gospel of Thomas*. In a similar way, the Early Christian Desert Fathers of the 4th Century understood the demonic as an extension of the self. As Peter Brown has written in *The Making of Late Antiquity*, what the monks meant by the demonic was "something more intimate than an attack from the outside. 'To be tried by demons' meant passing through a stage in the growth awareness of the lower frontiers of the personality."

Pseudo-Macarius writes of this awareness, "The heart itself is but a small vessel, yet dragons are there, and there are also lions; there are poisonous beasts and all the treasures of evil. But there, too, is God, the angels, the life and the kingdom, the light and the apostles, the heavenly

cities and the treasuries of grace—all things are there.”

Dogen Kigen, the 13th Century Japanese monk, explores the dilemma of the human heart by admonishing traditional moral teachings while rejecting any absolute distinction between good and evil. For Dogen, evil and good do not have any fixed, enduring self-nature, but are the fleeting results of an infinitely complex set of conditions. As with trees and grasses, cars and cats, houses and humans, evil and good are empty of self-nature and lack immutable existence. Instead of diagnosing evil as spiritual antimatter, as a dark ambient force, Dogen interprets evil as a relative condition, the result of countless circumstances. Evil is not everywhere or for everyone, the same.

As Protestant theologian Paul Tillich wrote, “In God, evil is conquered not by being annihilated but by being not actualized. It is actualized in the finite world, but not in the infinite ground of being.”

Accordingly, the practice of morality in Buddhism is not the annihilation of evil, but the “not doing of evil.” The nonproduction of evil is not realized when we are confirming or negating evil, but is actually a state prior to the thoughts of good or evil, before they are picked or chosen.


To not commit unwholesome acts is based in the primacy of practice, enlightenment, and morality. For Dogen, keeping one’s mind pure through the experience of seated meditation is itself maintaining the precepts. Thus to do good is not only a moral imperative but a quality of enlightenment. From this view, Buddhism’s precepts are a description of enlightened activity.

To maintain the pure precepts is to sit *zazen* (sitting meditation). To sit *zazen* is to study the self. To study the self is to study our transgressions. To study our

transgressions is to deconstruct them. To take the posture of *zazen* is to take the posture of not doing evil. It is moving from the "ought" to "is," from the "thou shalt not" to the "thou cannot."

Dogen's "Not Doing Evil" is a kind of rescue operation. It is an intention to contend with the world's horrific acts. It is the ancient discourse of good and evil through the realization that we are nothing but the dilemma of good and evil.

How does the mountain look at the mountain? How does the person look at the person? How do we save the cat? How do we save the child? How do we do good and not do evil? I don't know how, but I know we must be upright in the center of our lives, a light unto ourselves.



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P O E T R Y



Grief

Barbara Knight Katz

First there is shock, sharp catch of breath—
Then stillness and awe.

Death is a silent heart,
Powerfully, palpably still.

Now ice at the core,
The center cracks open
And numbness follows.

Later, the pain from the wounded center
Pounds, like waves breaking
on shore,
Breaking me.

Grief is stunning, mythic, intense,
Driving me downward.
From this underworld, treasures
are mined.

But that is later
And the cost is total.

After twenty-five years of teaching political philosophy, Barbara Knight Katz now is in private practice as a pastoral counselor. An ordained elder with Arlington Presbyterian Church, Barbara lives in Virginia.

Disarm me, O Lord

Chet Corey

Disarm me, O Lord.
Take away
the automatic weapon
of my voice;
the razor wit of intellect.
Open, O Lord,
the fist of my rage
into welcome
& praise.

O Architect
of air & mountain crag,
polish the stone cliff
of my features;
weather me
with wind & rain;
soften
my stare & scowl
into your graced face.

O Sculptor
of wave & shoreline,
if need be—
O to better me—
batter me, buckle me
with breakers
of hurricane & gale.
Out of sea salt & storm,
amalgamate my calm.

Chet Corey is a Covenant Affiliate of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (La Crosse, WI). His poetry most recently appeared in A New Song, The Chord, and Windhover.



Robert F. Campbell

Eyes Tightly Shut

Patty Gayes

Through eyes tightly shut
light filters in:
sunlight, shimmering through the tree's leaves,
dancing down into my eyes.

God's touch—at once felt and not,
but forever imprinted on my soul.
I struggle against that touch
with eyes tightly shut.

God's touch,
warmth that pierces and soothes,
brightness that flickers, penetrates,
and unceasingly stirs the soul.

Is it the beauty that I fear,
that keeps me bracing against his will?
Is it the newness I might become?
God invites, promises, loves.

But only I can open
these eyes tightly shut.

Patty Gayes is a wife, mother, and part-time business financing consultant living in the Chicago area. She is a student in the four-year Chicago Catholic Scripture School and is actively involved at her church in Eucharistic adoration and Scripture study.

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